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Ministry of Advanced Education

$10M TRIPLES GRADUATE STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

VANCOUVER – The Province is providing $10 million to triple the size of an internship program where graduate students will work with B.C. businesses to help increase the province's competitiveness, announced Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell today.

"These new funds will allow MITACS to provide more than 650 internships over the next four years, more than tripling the size of the program," said Coell. "The internship program will build the province's base of highly-skilled graduates while encouraging innovation and commercialization in B.C.'s knowledge-based economy. It is also leveraging another $5 million from industry partners for the program."

MITACS is a national research network that brings together university researchers and companies in a collaborative effort to solve industry challenges. All provincial public post-secondary institutions that offer graduate programs will be eligible to take part in ACCELERATE BC – B.C.'s Graduate Research Internship Program. It will allow graduate students to conduct applied research in partnership with industries and other organizations whose business is relevant to their studies.

"B.C.'s graduate students are truly an untapped resource," said Dr Arvind Gupta, scientific director of MITACS. "The research expertise that the next generation is developing at the province's universities and colleges is going to help B.C.'s businesses to become more competitive on the national and international stage. This $10 million in new funding from the provincial government will help to ensure that knowledge transfer takes place."

This program has had many successes, including helping energy companies to model the dynamics of fuel cells, to increasing the efficiency of companies' operations. One internship is protecting B.C.'s natural resources by updating modelling techniques to predict the spread of industrial noise underwater as sea animals are vulnerable to noise. This project is making B.C. a pioneer in noise impact assessment and may allow the expansion of underwater oil and gas exploration. It also brings together public and private sectors in minimizing B.C.'s environmental footprint.

"Graduate students bring enhanced skills to corporations and contribute to innovation in the tools used by all workers, creating an expanding cycle of productivity," said Coell. "Since students are often hired by these organizations upon graduation, internships also increase the retention of highly qualified personnel in B.C. that are so necessary for our booming economy."

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Since 2001, British Columbia has invested over $1.5 billion in research and leveraged more than $900 million in added research funding from other sources. Government is also funding the addition of 2,500 new graduate spaces over the next four years.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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BACKGROUNDER

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ACCELERATE BC – GRADUATE RESEARCH INTERSHIP PROGRAM

About ACCELERATE BC:

- ACCELERATE BC is an internship program that connects B.C. businesses with graduate student interns and their professors to help create innovative business practices, products and solve ongoing industry challenges.
- It grew out of an existing internship program in the mathematical sciences operated by Burnaby-based research network, MITACS. The additional $10 million in provincial funding has allowed the program to expand to include diverse disciplines and to provide more than 650 internships over the next four years.
- For B.C. graduate students, it provides unique opportunities to apply their skills to challenges faced by business in B.C. and a way to develop professional relationships outside of academia.

How ACCELERATE BC works:

- Most internships are four months in length, though some can be longer.
- Graduate student interns spend half of their time over the four-month internship period on site with a B.C. company doing research for the mutually agreed upon project. The balance of their time is spent back at their university, developing the techniques required to accomplish the project's goals.
- Each four-month internship is co-funded by the partner company and MITACS, through the support of the Ministry of Advanced Education, with each party contributing $7,500.

Examples of internships:

- A University of Victoria mechanical engineering graduate student undertook a four-month internship with Pemberton-based SyncWave Energy to further develop the company's prototype wave power generator, which will produce green energy for isolated coastal communities and off-shore installations.
- A mathematics graduate student from Simon Fraser University spent four months with Vancouver, B.C.-based video game developer, Radical Entertainment, researching the optimal balance of physics and aesthetics to create realistic water and smoke simulations in the company's games.

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